

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU

COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 12764

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JA

SUBJECT: LDP LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE: THE PACE QUICKENS

SUMMARY. JAPANESE TOP-LEVEL BARGAINING OVER MODALITIES OF MIKI'S RELINQUISHING PRIME MINISTERSHIP CONTINUE. FIRST TRIPARTITE (MIKI, FUKUDA, OHIRA) NEGOTIATING SESSION, SCHEDULED FOR LATE AFTERNOON AUGUST 24, COULD END IN COMPLETE DISAGREEMENT OR COMPROMISE, BUT WE THINK IT MORE LIKELY THAT PARTICIPANTS WILL REHASH PAST DEMANDS OR DISCUSS NEW PROPOSALS. BOTH SIDES ARE DOING ALL IN THEIR POWER TO HEIGHTEN TENSIONS IN HOPES OF IMPROVING THEIR BARGAINING POSITION AND SOME MEDIA REPORTS SUGGEST WE HAVE REACHED THE POINT OF SHOWDOWN. WHILE THAT IS CONCEIVABLE, OUR OWN ESTIMATE OF PACE AND CONCERNS OF MEN INVOLVED SUGGESTS THAT MORE TIME WILL BE REQUIRED TO REACH THAT STAGE. END SUMMARY.

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1. WE HAVE NOW ENTERED A PERIOD OF FRENETIC POLITICAL

ACTIVITY AIMED AT INFLUENCING ONGOING TOP-LEVEL BARGAINING SESSIONS OVER PRIME MINISTERSHIP. AT AUGUST 21 MEETING, FUKUDA URGED MIKI TO STEP DOWN BEFORE A GENERAL ELECTION. ON AUGUST 23, MIKI PROPOSED TO OHIRA THAT LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE AND OPENING OF EXTRAORDINARY DIET SESSION BE CONSIDERED SEPARATELY, BUT THIS GAMBIT WAS REJECTED BY FUKUDA AND OHIRA AT A JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE THAT EVENING. FIRST MIKI-FUKUDA-OHIRA DISCUSSION NOW SCHEDULED FOR LATE AFTERNOON AUGUST 24.

2. THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE CONCEIVABLE OUTCOMES OF SESSIONS. THEY MIGHT END IN COMPLETE DISAGREEMENT, WHICH WOULD PROBABLY LEAD TO ESCALATION WITH POSSIBILITY THAT MIKI MIGHT CALL OFF TALKS ALTOGETHER AND BULL HIS WAY THROUGH TO ELECTIONS, WHICH HE WOULD PORTRAY AS TAKING HIS CASE TO THE PEOPLE. SESSIONS MIGHT END IN COMPROMISE WITH MIKI STEPPING DOWN (A) BEFORE AN EXTRAORDINARY DIET SESSION, I.E., "IMMEDIATELY," (B) DURING AN EXTRAORDINARY DIET SESSION, (C) IMMEDIATELY AFTER AN EXTRAORDINARY DIET SESSION, PRESUMABLY IN LATE SEPTEMBER (WHICH WE ARE TOLD FUKUDA INCLINES TO), OR (D) AFTER A GENERAL ELECTION. A THIRD, AND MORE LIKELY POSSIBILITY TODAY (AUGUST 24) AT LEAST, WOULD BE FOR BOTH SIDES TO REITERATE EARLIER PROPOSALS OR PRESENT NEW IDEAS AND, IN EITHER EVENT, AGREE TO TALK AGAIN.

3. WE HAVE HEARD FROM SOURCES CLOSE TO BOTH FUKUDA AND MIKI THAT IMMEDIATE POINT IS WHETHER OHIRA WILL EXPLICITLY ACKNOWLEDGE WHAT MOST BELIEVE TO BE UNDERSTANDING THAT HE WILL DEFER TO FUKUDA'S PRECEDENCE AS SUCCESSOR TO PRIME MINISTERSHIP. IF HE DOES NOT, MIKI MAY WELL BELIEVE HE CAN DIVIDE AND CONQUER THE CHALLENGERS. BUT IF OHIRA UNMISTAKEABLY ENDORSES FUKUDA, MIKI IS MUCH MORE LIKELY TO "COMPROMISE."

4. AS BACKGROUND TO THIS BARGAINING, BOTH SIDES ARE ATTEMPTING TO BOLSTER THEIR LEADERS' BARGAINING POSITIONS. AN ANTI-MIKI CAUCUS OF MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS OF ALL LDP DIET MEMBERS CONVENED MID-DAY AUGUST 24 AND MAY WELL PASS A MIKI NON-CONFIDENCE MOTION IN EARLY EVENING, CONFIDENTIAL

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DEPDNDING ON RESULTS OF MIKI-FUKUDA-OHIRA MEETING. VALIDITY OF CAUCUS ACTION, HOWEVER, IS CERTAIN TO BE DENIED BY PRO-MIKI PARTY LEADERSHIP ON GROUNDS CONVENORS FAILED TO OBTAIN CUSTOMARY APPROVAL OF FORMAL LDP LEADERSHIP. THERE IS MORE REMOTE POSSIBILITY THAT AS MANY AS FIFTEEN OF TWENTY-ONE CABINET MINISTERS COULD SUBMIT THEIR RESIGNATIONS, BUT LIKELIHOOD IS THAT THIS THREAT WILL REMAIN JUST THAT FOR A WHILE LONGER. PRO-MIKI FORCES, ON OTHER HAND, STRESS THEIR

MAN'S CONTINUING POPULAR SUPPORT, AND EDITORIALS IN NEARLY ALL LEADING NEWSPAPERS (EXCEPT MAINICHI) UNDERSCORE LACK OF JUSTIFICATION FOR DEPOSING MIKI. MIKI ALSO WILL APPEAR (PROBABLY LIVE) ON A REGULARLY SCHEDULED NHK INTERVIEW IN LATE EVENING. EVENT COULD ASSIST HIS APPEAL TO PEOPLE OVER HEADS OF HIS PARTY OPPONENTS. WHILE TOP LDP LEADERSHIP (SHIINA, NAKASONE, NADAO, MATSUNO), EVENLY SPLIT PRO- AND ANTI-MIKI, ARE SEEKING TO MEDIATE DIFFERENCES BY END OF WEEK, NO ONE TAKES THEM VERY SERIOUSLY.

5. THUS, WHILE IT IS CONCEIVABLE AS SOME REPORTS HAVE IT, THAT WE ARE HEADED FOR A SHOWDOWN THIS EVENING (OF AUGUST 24), WE DO NOT THINK SO, JUDGING FROM PACE OF THE STRUGGLE THUS FAR AND OUR NOTION OF CONCERNS AND INTENTIONS OF PRINCIPAL PARTIPANTS, WE BELIEVE THAT MORE TIME WILL BE REQUIRED BEFORE THE SHOWDOWN STAGE IS REACHED.
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